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able to muster their usual numbers; the few they were able to collect, were mostly composed of old men and children; there were also a number of girls, who, laying aside that delicacy and unobtrusive modesty which should peculiarly characterise their sex, walked in the procession. Another year, liberal policy may so far prevail, as to reduce them to even a smaller procession.

PORCIA.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

ON GHOSTS.

THE present age has been remarkable for the decline of superstition; and it is pretty generally acknowledged that good-sense is gaining ground; yet many remnants of superstition still linger amongst us, owing not a little to the dread that prevails over many, of being called *atheists*, or *deists*; names which are usually plentifully bestowed on such as oppose common errors, however ridiculous, which have become almost as firm as a creed, from the length of time mankind have believed them.

A second cause of the slow progress of knowledge, which has considerable weight with society, is, that some persons whose general information on most subjects, is far above the mass of mankind, have not emancipated themselves from erroneous opinions, which were doubtless formed in infancy, by their parents or nurses. Opinions formed in early life often take the firmest root; so much so, that all the powers of reason have been often found insufficient to eradicate them.

Among the superstitious relics remaining, we may fairly rank the belief in Ghosts, although few of late years have made much noise in

the world; those of Hammersmith and Stamford have been the chief. And both, though now consigned to oblivion, in their day bid fair to rival the hero of Cock lane.

It is not a little surprising, that, in all the stories on record, concerning spectres, we never hear a reasonable cause assigned for their appearance, if we except a few, who we are told came to disclose where they had hid their money; doubtless, wishing to have their penny a *turning*. To the appearance of these ghosts few of us, perhaps, would have any objection; but the far greatest part, if we credit the stories handed down to us, appeared with very different views, mostly, merely, with seeming intention to frighten people: commonly some pious old woman, who knew nothing concerning them, till they appeared, uttering a *hollow noise*, and perhaps all bloody, with their throats cut from ear to ear—"Grinning horribly a ghastly smile."

Midnight, agreeably to every information, is the chief time that spirits make their appearance; yet a few are recorded who were so bold as to appear in day light; but if spirits appear at night, though we do not learn that they carry either candle, torch, or taper, the place is said to be highly illuminated: if a candle is burning it is said to burn blue, which has ever been considered a *sure* sign of a spirit being near.

Most animals, particularly dogs, are said to be endowed with the faculty of seeing spirits, often before they are perceived by human eyes; on those occasions they are said to be much agitated by fear, hiding themselves as much as possible. Miles G. Lewis, alias Monk Ghost Lewis, who, it is presumed, knows more about those affairs than any person now alive, takes notice of the

above remarkable circumstances, on the appearance of the ghost of Alonzo the Brave ; he informs us,

"The dogs as they eyed him drew back
in affright ;
"The lights in the chamber burned
blue."

White, according to our legends, is very predominant in the costume of ghosts ; yet some, like the ghost in *Hamlet*, are said to have appeared in the colours of their usual apparel ; be this as it may, it is likely they have an aversion to black, though I confess I think it would be a very becoming colour for ghosts ; yet only one is noticed adopting it, and that one in the beautiful old ballad of William and Margaret, wherein the dress of the ghost is thus described :—

"And clay-cold was her lily hand,
"That held her sable shroud."

Some roads and places are still somewhat famous for the appearance of spirits, especially those near ruins or plantings, from which we may conclude they are fond of shelter. I remember a by-road near the place in which I lived in infancy, that was well studded with venerable trees on each side, which many good people were timorous to enter, after sunset, several persons having related that they had seen in this place, a black man, driving a fiery chariot, drawn by four black horses ! What rendered this story still more surprising, and certainly more solemn, it was asserted by some, and pretty generally believed, that this charioteer appeared sometimes without his head ! in which state we may suppose he cut rather a singular appearance. I have not been able to learn whether he spoke without his head or not !!!

Strange and incredible as it may

appear, numerous persons, calling themselves rational beings, believed such nonsense as matters of fact, within these fifty years ; for such stuff then formed a larger portion of country fire-side information than at present ; old women, and those of the same standard of knowledge, often passing the dreary winter nights in relating terrific fables of ghosts, witches, and murders, which often go hand in hand. I remember, when a boy, being highly delighted with such relations, though they always made me afraid to go to bed, or enter a place that was dark. Sometimes after those tales of terror, I have been so timid as to refrain looking about, lest I should behold some horrid spectre ; and even yet, in spite of scepticism, I am rather afraid to remain in a room without light, which I ascribe to the numerous hobgoblin stories I heard in infancy.

At present many persons are beginning to see the impropriety of telling such stories to children, or permitting grannums to frighten them with boggle-boo's ; we may therefore conclude that the time is not distant when *Robin Redy, Stumpy*, and numerous others of the same corps, will be rarely heard of, even in the fabulous registers of old women.

ALEXIS.

Woodburn.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

TESTIMONY IN FAVOUR OF THE UTILITY OF INSTRUCTION ; BY A COMPETENT WITNESS, AND ONE WELL VERSED IN THE PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE CRIMES OF MANKIND.

Extract of a Letter from the Rev. Mr. Ford, Ordinary of Newgate, to Basil Montagu, Esq.